

COOK'S

ILLUSTRATED

LIGHT CREAMY BASIL PESTO

Makes about 1 cup, enough to sauce 1 pound cooked pasta. From The Best Light Recipes.

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Our big challenge in creating a light basil pesto recipe was in coming up with a way to reduce the amount of oil. Thinking that ricotta cheese, when pureed with the other pesto ingredients, would have an emulsifying effect similar to oil, we tried multiple batches, lowering the amount of olive oil and adding ricotta each time. Finally, we reached a combination that gave our light basil pesto recipe a creamy texture as well as a sweet and welcome dairy flavor.

Do not substitute nonfat ricotta for the part-skim or the pesto will be dry and a bit gummy. Do not include the stems or buds of the basil because they taste bitter. Bruising the basil leaves helps to bring out their sweet flavor. This pesto and the others that follow can be served not only in pasta, but as a condiment—try a spoonful on a baked potato or spread onto pizza dough before baking.

INGREDIENTS

- 4** medium garlic cloves , unpeeled
- 3** cups fresh basil leaf , stems and buds discarded (2 to 3 bunches)
- 1** ounce Parmesan cheese , grated (about 1/2 cup)
- 1/4** cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- 1** shallot , minced (about 2 tablespoons)
- 2** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Toast the garlic in a small skillet over medium heat, shaking the pan occasionally, until the color of the cloves deepens slightly, about 7 minutes. Transfer the garlic to a plate to cool, then peel the cloves and chop or press through a garlic press.
2. Place the basil in a heavy-duty gallon-sized zipper-lock bag. Pound the bag with the flat side of a meat pounder or rolling pin until all the leaves are lightly bruised.
3. Process the garlic, basil, Parmesan, ricotta, shallot, oil, and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed. Transfer the mixture to a small bowl, and season with salt and pepper to taste. (The pesto can be covered with a sheet of plastic wrap pressed flush against its surface and refrigerated for up to 3 days.)



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